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ABSTRACT

University faculty and practicing educators in Washington State are concerned about the future availability of talented candidates for leadership positions in public and private elementary and secondary schools. This paper examines market trends for the positions of principal and vice-principal in Washington State. It identifies the following four trends: (1) small candidate pools; (2) the continuing construction of new schools; (3) increased numbers of administrator retirements through the year 2000; and (4) decreased numbers of students in educational-administration programs. In addition, turnover patterns offer incumbents and newcomers opportunities for positions. District-level attention to principals' role overload is the key variable for creating a better match between numbers of candidates and numbers of positions. A group of practitioners who attended the June 1996 conference of the Association of Washington School Principals and the Washington Association of School Administrators developed the following recommendations for increasing the number of talented candidates: make the principal's role more attractive; increase support for incumbents and interns; improve communication about available positions; and increase funding for internships. Three tables are included. (LMI)

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Market trends in school administration: the case in Washington state

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RUNNING HEAD: Market Trends

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Abstract

Market trends for principal and vice principal positions in Washington state are explored. Four trends are identified: small candidate pools for positions, continuing new school construction, increased numbers of retirements through 2000, and decreased numbers of students in educational administration programs. Turnover patterns continue to offer incumbents and newcomers opportunities for positions as well. District level attention to the role overload of principals cited as the key variable in creating a better match between numbers of candidates and numbers of positions.

Results of problemsolving sessions with Washington administrators in June, 1996 reveal a number of action arenas available to all constituencies: professional associations, state department, universities, school administrators and district level administrators.

Among the state of Washington's programs in educational administration, regardless of their usual size, is a continuing concern about the future availability of talented candidates for leadership positions in public and private elementary and secondary schools. Data compiled from various state and institutional sources convey the picture of needs for administrators over the next few years. Since the practicing professionals' response to this picture is of concern to university faculty as well, the following information is shared both with practitioners and with other university faculty, in hopes of taking it into mutually beneficial discussions.

Four major trends are apparent in the administrative candidate picture known to Washington's university faculty in educational administration: small candidate pools for advertised administrative positions, more positions available through building programs to accommodate increasing enrollments, high numbers of potential retirements in the next five years, and fewer students in the internship phase of preparation. Each of these, separately, is cause for concern. Together, the trend toward diminishing interest in school leadership roles is alarming.

The major trend experienced by Washington school districts is the smaller candidate pools for advertised positions. Both professional association personnel and certification officials in Washington's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction indicate this is especially alarming in the secondary school principal searches, which have had fewer than a dozen applicants for positions in major high schools in Western Washington. The realities of the workload in these positions for educators are clear to those in the "pipeline," mostly teachers and counselors with teaching credentials. Public school life, in particular, is complex and demanding for administrators . Therefore, one aspect of the picture is the desirability of the role as perceived by educators who are certificated for that purpose. The net result is greater turnover within this group of administrators than for others.

A second trend is in the number of positions, which is projected to continue to rise over the next three to five years as the numbers of Washington schools (2000 operating now state-wide) increase to match increasing student populations. According to the Facilities Director in

the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the increase in school buildings will not level off until the year 2000 .

The third trend is in the eligibility among current principals, given their age group and number of years of service, to retire within the next 5-15 years. Two sets of data are available: Professional association survey data on administrators' retirement intentions (Association of Washington School Principals, 1988) and OSPI's Information Resource Management office data on administrators eligible for retirement at different ages (Strozyk, 1995). The former study is important because many variables enter into each administrator's decision on timing of retirement. The Association of Washington School Principals' 1988 survey on retirement plans among its membership generated information from 1179 principals and assistant principals, 39% of whom said they intended to retire by 1995. An additional 39% indicated they planned to retire by 2003. Only 10% indicated retirement plans by 2007, which reflected the age distribution of the building administrator population at that time.

The data on retirement eligibility (Strozyk, 1995), featured in the following table, show the number of current Washington public school administrators eligible to retire from their positions as principals and vice principals after 30 years of service (their first opportunity, regardless of age, to get full benefits). The percentages reflect the total number of such public school positions in the 1994-95 school year.

Table 1

Retirement Eligibility of K-12 Principals and Vice Principals

ACADEMIC YEAR	ELEMENTARY Principal	ELEMENTARY Vice Principal	SECONDARY Principal	SECONDARY Vice Principal
1994-95	91 (8.3%)	2 (2.0%)	36 (6.0%)	32 (5.5%)
1995-96	33 (3.0%)	1 (1.0%)	22 (3.6%)	7 (1.2%)
1996-97	29 (4.5%)	1 (1.0%)	24 (4.0%)	17 (2.9%)
1997-98	49 (5.4%)	3 (2.9%)	35 (5.8%)	16 (2.7%)
1998-99	59 (5.4%)	3 (2.9%)	36 (6.0%)	25 (4.3%)
1999-2000	60 (5.4%)	4 (3.9%)	42 (7.0%)	26 (4.5%)
2000-2001*	60 (5.4%)	4 (3.9%)	45 (7.7%)	28 (4.8%)
2001-2002*	60 (5.4%)	4 (3.9%)	45 (7.7%)	28 (4.8%)
Total Eligible	441 (40%)	22 (22%)	285 (47%)	179 (31%)
Total positions in 1994-95	1101	102	604	582

* Projections based on trends up to that point. Data available from the OSPI office of Information Resources are actual up through 2000.

These figures are extremely conservative . Telephone contact with the Washington state actuary's office about usual retirement rates among those in the 30-years of service category indicated that 50% of those in the total pool of educators (teachers, principals, superintendents, etc.) retire the first year they are eligible and 25% of the remaining 50% retire each year thereafter, leaving fewer than 25% of the original group in those positions in their 34th year of service. This pattern assures a steady stream of retirees each year, as expressed in the 2000+ years' projections.

National statistics on job turnover provide a different way of thinking about these data as evidence of job openings that offer our students opportunities to move into admini-strative positions after their typical three-year program. Across all organizations and regardless of the age of the worker, the national figure on job turnover after the first year is 15%. Among school principals, the typical non-retirement turnover occurs when a vice principal of a school gets a job as a principal, leaving a position as vice principal open to a less experienced administrator. Therefore, at the 15% turnover rate (not including retirement), the number of openings among Washington's elementary school administrators, using the 1101 figure from the OSPI data (Strozyk, 1995), could be 180 a year. Because most secondary schools of any size (900 or more) have a minimum of one and, more likely, two or three vice principals, the number of openings available in these schools each year could be around 178. Those in the office of the Association for Washington School Principals report job openings announcements they received in 1994-95 at 155 (a significantly lower number than for 1993-94, when the legislature authorized early retirement). Because the AWSP staff acknowledge that they never get notification of all the openings that occur, these are, again, conservative figures. Their numbers are affected as well by instances where teachers or counselors with admini-strative certification are assigned to building administration roles without opening the position.

Given that the students who enter an administration program usually complete it within three calendar years and most are ready to apply for administrative positions within 2-3 years of graduation, the "market" that can be described for their skills is roughly 3-5 years ahead of their entry date as graduate students. Therefore, assuming that new students entering this fall (1995) will be interested in applying for their first admini-strative jobs in the years 1998 to 2000, the number of openings projected from the retirement data alone is respectable. Adding in the 15% turnover rates among the schools in operation in 1994-95 boosts the openings figures to over 240 in any given year. The addition of more elementary and middle schools around the state is guaranteed to occur over the next five years, which adds to the job openings when those schools open and they also can be included in the total count for estimating

turnover within three years of beginning operations. This picture suggests, then, a continuing need for for substantial-sized administrative preparation programs, just to fill the projected vacancies.

The fourth trend, then, is the most disturbing. The faculty of Washington universities preparing school administrators have noted heavy fluctuations in enrollments of new students and a definite downturn in the numbers of interns since the group began keeping track of these numbers. Washington Council for Educational Administration Programs data (1995) show that across the Washington institutions represented by this group, 300 students were in the internship phase of their preparation in 1993-94, while only 240 were in internships in 1994-95. The figure for 1995-96 is 215. In addition, most faculty have noted declines in enrollments or other shifts in the population that are of concern. Some students enter such programs because they are interested in exercising leadership in their settings, but not as principals. The job itself does not seem to attract educators as it has in the past.

An additional disincentive for those who *do* wish to work in school administration roles is the new Washington state certification standards (1997-98 implementation affects students interning in 1998-99), which increase the level of commitment demanded of students interested in the principalship. The 720-hour (90 days) requirement for the internship is structured in half-day increments during the time students are present; such stipulations mean that school district administrators will have to be very creative to arrange for interns to have time free from other responsibilities. Meanwhile, students without the state funding resources will have to meet the same hour requirements, increasing their costs by forcing the issue of parttime work or leaves of absence without pay.

While all agree on the point of more intensive experience in the role for these newcomers to be ready to head schools, the combination of district and student resource constraints with the need for greater numbers of applicants to fill extremely complex and stressful roles has created a situation that demands assertive attention. The combination of more precise skill achievement and longer periods of time in the internship requires school

district administrators to identify and carefully mentor their "most likely to succeed" candidates. The new Washington state requirements for competency combine with the role complexity to demand greater skill and knowledge early in the new administrator's career, leaving less time for them to "season" through on the job experience. The need for collaboration between university faculty and school administrators is, therefore, increased.

Lastly, since we cannot hope to draw talented educators to a role that has become nearly impossible to fulfill effectively, school district leaders must advocate for school-level administrators as human beings. A good deal of "marketing" for the role can be achieved by working with local patrons to change their long-held expectations that principals and vice principals are "supposed" to be ever present at all times of the day and night. If the role expectations are reasonable, talented educators will want to meet those expectations--and move beyond them in unique ways. When their creativity is unleashed, we'll know we have hope for a bright future for the youngsters in their care.

References

Association of Washington School Principals (1988). Retirement survey. Unpublished survey data. Olympia, WA.

Mehring, A. (personal communication, October, 1995).

Strozyk, E. (1995). Supt/principal retirement statistics for school year 1994-5. Unpublished computer data. Olympia, WA: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

EPILOGUE

From the session in June, 1996 at the Summer Conference of the Association of Washington School Principals and Washington Association of School Administrators, a break-out group of 15-18 practitioners generated a first-level response to the challenge. In a standard Situation-Target-Proposal structure for problemsolving, the group filled in more of the situational factors. Typical among them were:

higher expectations for immediate response, success in multiple roles, new skills

broader technical knowledge (five roles' worth)

shift from manager to change agent role

fewer advantages in status, pay, control of own time

teachers' lack of association with administrative roles' connections to teaching

From those the group developed six targets, as shown in Table 2. Making the role more attractive, increasing the support for incumbents and interns, and communicating better about the job openings available were ways the group could see to increase the number of talented candidates applying for open positions.

Table 2

Targets and Proposals for Increasing Administrator Pools

TARGETS	PROPOSALS
• Appropriate-sized pools of candidates	• Increase breadth of marketing by superintendents • Recruit replacement as everyone's role; be aggressive about mentoring 3-4 year veterans for administration in 2-3 years, not in 10
• Talented, well-prepared candidates	• Develop more systematic processes for identifying talented individuals • Facilitate joint efforts between universities, associations and districts to identify candidates
• Attractive role for which principals will advocate	• Identify benefits of the role; "sell" the positive aspects to talented teachers • Set stronger/more positive "public profile" of role • Work toward a cultural norm of sharing among principals and with teachers
• Adequate support for newcomers to role and to new skill expectations	• Delineate clearer assistant principal role, with career path toward principalship • Provide more mentoring, formal and informal systems • Provide stronger coaching in initial years • Nurture leadership in others, show caring
• More funding for internships	• Model job-shared teaching to ease internship options • Encourage more flexibility in certification process to accommodate those in key roles other than teaching • Intitiate stronger lobbying for appropriate salaries for principals
• Tighter communication networks about available job openings	• Focus internships on leadership issues, not on management and "administrivia" and nitpicking • Provide internship in different school than the teaching assignment; emphasize cross-cultural focus • Urge university faculty to value/provide instruction in the critical skills and issues of practice • Identify key experiences and screen candidates for them? • Clarify characteristics for candidates: stress tolerance, ambiguity tolerance, self-starter, integrity, value for kids, courage to face accountability for performance • Use assessment center model as selection device • Initiate principal academies/centers • Provide better access through technology for those interested in preparation programs • Use ethical personnel practices re: openings • Address disadvantage of being inside candidate

The proposals they had for these targets, also listed in Table 2, span the spectrum of groups with interests in and responsibility for succession in school level administrators. Among them are university faculties, district level administrators, school level administrators, the professional associations, and the state department of education. As is apparent in Table 3, which shows the responsibilities for each proposal as related to these groups, plenty of work is available for all participants.

Table 3

Participants* in Proposals for Increasing Administrator Pools

PROPOSALS	A	St	U	S	D
Increased breadth of marketing by superintendents					D
Recruit replacement as everyone's role; be aggressive about mentoring 3-4 year veterans for administration in 2-3 years, not in 10				S	
Develop more systematic processes for identifying talented individuals				S	
Facilitate joint efforts between universities, associations and districts to identify candidates	A		U		D
Identify benefits of the role; "sell" the positive aspects to talented teachers	A			S	
Set stronger/more positive "public profile" of role	A				D
Work toward a cultural norm of sharing among principals and with teachers			U	S	D
Delineate clearer assistant principal role, with career path toward principalship	A				D
Provide more mentoring, formal and informal systems	A		U		D
Provide stronger coaching in initial years				S	D
Nurture leadership in others, show caring				S	

*A=Association; St=State Board; U=University; S=School; D=District

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Table 3 PROPOSALS (continued)	A	St	U	S	D
Model job-shared teaching to ease internship options				S	
Encourage more flexibility in certification process to accommodate those in key roles other than teaching	A	St	U		
Intitiate stronger lobbying for appropriate salaries for principals	A				D
Focus internships on leadership issues, not on management and "administrivia" and nitpicking			U	S	
Provide internship in different school than the teaching assignment; emphasize cross-cultural focus			U	S	D
Urge university faculty to value/provide instruction in the critical skills and issues of practice	A	St	U	S	
Identify key experiences and screen candidates for them?	A		U		
Clarify characteristics for candidates: stress tolerance, ambiguity tolerance, self-starter, integrity, value for kids, courage to face accountability for performance	A		U		
Use assessment center model as selection device					D
Initiate principal academies/centers	A		U		D
Provide better access through technology for those interested in preparation programs	A		U		D
Use ethical personnel practices re: openings	A				D
Address disadvantage of being inside candidate			U		D

These proposals, while informally developed among a non-random group of practitioners in a single state, show a direction that university faculty in educational administration can choose to follow as initiators of many of these activities. We can, in our programs, encourage our colleagues to combine administrator and teacher candidates in some courses or course activities (Sarason, 1995) as a way of focusing each of them on the issues they share. We can connect our recent graduates with current students in the same or nearby districts to act as mentors and model those behaviors for others in their districts. Assuredly, since we are the second levels of

influence (after the state departments' regulations) over internship design and activities, the faculty can structure the focus on leadership tasks, larger-scale projects for which interns must take responsibility, and broader-based experiences in other schools across the district and community that more closely align with the school administrator as school representative and advocate. With the advent of new standards for principal preparation, most of us already are examining programs to identify the match between assignments and activities in courses and the skill and knowledge demands of practice. Those same standards feature characteristics and sensitivities that reflect the increased demands on principals; our programs need only be designed to feature them (tolerance for stress and ambiguity, integrity, kids as the first clients, courage). Many of our universities have initiated principal academies and others are likely to create them. Some of us are becoming fairly sophisticated in using technology and will have to extend ourselves further--for marketing our programs, advertising openings, and communicating with each other and with our other constituencies. All these efforts and more are the beginning for university faculty. If we begin and model the behavior we believe is appropriate, our students will absorb that. Further, if we advocate for locating educators with administrative talents in the most recent sense of collaborative, intelligent, risk-taking individuals who care deeply about students and are willing to serve their needs through supporting teachers and other professionals, we can do our part to increase the talent pool for administration that is so dreadfully endangered now, at least in Washington State. The other groups can be encouraged by us, pressured by our students, and informed through their professional associations of the daunting future for education should they choose to ignore the signs. I'm betting that enough of us are caring enough and smart enough to do the right thing.

Reference

Sarason, S. B. (1995). *Parental involvement and the political principle: Why the existing governance structure of schools should be abolished.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.